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TRANSLATION

OF THE

CÉNA UPANISHAD

One of the Chapters

OF THE

SÁMA VÉDA;

ACCORDING TO THE GLOSS OF THE CELEBRATED

SHANCARÁCHÁRYA:

ESTABLISHING THE UNITY AND THE SOLE OMNIPOTENCE OF THE

SUPREME BEING:

AND THAT

HE ALONE

IS THE OBJECT OF WORSHIP.

BY RAMMOHUN ROY.

Calcutta:

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1816.

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BIBLIOTHECA

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INTRODUCTION.

SINCE my publication of the abridgment of the *Vedánta*, containing an exposition of all the *Véds*, as given by the great VYÁS, I have, for the purpose of illustrating and confirming the view that he has taken of them, translated into Bengalee, the principal chapters of the Véds, as being of unquestionable authority amongst all Hindoos. This work will, I trust, by explaining to my countrymen the real spirit of the Hindoo Scriptures, which is but the decla-

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ration of the unity of God, tend, in a great degree, to correct the erroneous conceptions, which have prevailed with regard to the doctrines they inculcate—It will also, I hope, tend to discriminate those parts of the Véds, which are to be interpreted in an allegorical sense, and consequently to correct those exceptionable practices, which not only deprive Hindoos in general of the common comforts* of society, but also lead them frequently to self-destruction†, or to the sacrifice‡ of the lives of their friends and relations.

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* A Hindoo of cast can only eat once between sun-rise and sun-set—can not eat dressed victuals in a boat or ship—nor clothed—nor in a tavern—nor any food that has been touched by a person of a different cast—nor, if interrupted, while eating, can he resume his meal.

† As at Prayaga, Gunga Sagar, and under the wheels of the car of Jagannath.

‡ As for instance, persons whose recovery from sickness is supposed to be doubtful are carried to die on the Banks of the Ganges. This is practised by the Hindoos of Bengal only, the cruelty of which affects, even Hindoos of Behar, Ilahabad, and all the Upper-provinces.

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It is with no ordinary feeling of satisfaction that I have already seen many respectable persons of my country men, to the great disappointment of their interested spiritual guides, rise superior to their original prejudices, and enquire into the truths of religion. As many European gentlemen, especially those who interest themselves in the improvement of their fellow-creatures, may be gratified with a view of the doctrines of the original work, it appeared to me, that I might best contribute to that gratification, by translating a few chapters of the Véd into the English language, which I have accordingly done, and now submit them to their candid judgment—Such benevolent people will perhaps, rise from a perusal of them, with the conviction, that in the most ancient times the inhabitants of this part of the globe (at least the more intelligent class) were not unacquainted with metaphysical subjects; that allegorical language, or description was very frequently em-

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ployed, to represent the attributes of the Creator, which were sometimes designated as independent existences; and that however suitable this method might be to the refined understandings of men of learning, it had the most mischievous effect, when literature and philosophy decayed, producing all those absurdities and idolatrous notions, which have checked, or rather destroyed, every mark of reason, and darkened every beam of understanding.

The Véd, from which all Hindoo literature is derived, is, in the opinion of the Hindoos, an inspired work, coeval with the existence of the world. It is divided into four parts, viz. Rig, Yajur, Sam, and At'harva, these are again divided into several branches, and these last are subdivided into chapters—It is the general characteristic of each Véd, that the primary chapters of each branch, treat of astronomy, medicine, arms, and other arts and sciences. They also exhibit allegorical representations of the

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attributes* of the Supreme Being, by means of earthly objects, animate or inanimate, whose shapes or properties are analogous to the nature of those attributes, and pointing out the modes of their worship, immediately, or through the medium of fire. In the subsequent chapters, the unity of the Supreme Being, as the sole Ruler of the Universe, is plainly inculcated, and the mode of worshipping him particularly directed. The doctrine of a plurality of Gods and Goddesses laid down in the preceding chapters, is not only controverted, but reasons assigned for its introduction; for instance, that the worship of the Sun and Fire, together with the whole allegorical system, were only inculcated for the sake of those, whose limited understandings rendered them incapable of comprehending and adoring the invisible Supreme Being; so that such per-

* It is my intention to give with the blessing of God, in my next publication, an account of the relation betwixt those attributes and the allegorical representations used to denote them.

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sons might not remain in a brutified state, destitute of all religious principles. Should this explanation given by the Véd itself, as well as by its celebrated commentator Vyas, not be allowed to reconcile those passages which are seemingly at variance with each other, as those, that declare the unity of the invisible Supreme Being, with others, which describe a plurality of independant visible Gods; the whole work must, I am afraid, not only be stripped of its authority, but looked upon as altogether unintelligible.

I have often lamented that in our general researches into theological truth, we are subjected to the conflict of many obstacles. When we look to the traditions of ancient nations, we often find them at variance with each other, and when discouraged by this circumstance, we appeal to reason as a surer guide, we soon find how incompetent it is, alone, to conduct us to the object of our pursuit—We often find that instead of facilitating our endeavours or clearing

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up our perplexities, it only serves to generate an universal doubt, incompatible with principles, on which our comfort and happiness mainly depend.—The best method perhaps is, neither to give ourselves up, exclusively, to the guidance of the one or the other; but by a proper use of the lights furnished by both, endeavour to improve our intellectual and moral faculties, relying on the goodness of the Almighty Power, which alone enables us to attain that which we earnestly and diligently seek for.

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UPANISHAD

OF THE

VÉDA.

1st. WHO is he [*asks a Pupil of his Spiritual Father*] under whose sole will, the Intellectual Power makes its approach *to different objects?* Who is he, under whose authority, *Breath*, the primitive *power in the body*, makes its operation? Who is he, by whose direction, language is *regularly* pronounced? And who is that immaterial being, that applies vision and hearing *to their respective objects?*

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2d. He, [*answers the spiritual parent*,] who is the sense of the sense of hearing; the intellect of the intellect; the essential cause of language; the breath of breath; the sense of the sense of vision;—This is the being, *concerning whom you would* enquire:—Learned men having relinquished *the notion of self-independence, and self-consideration, from knowing the Supreme understanding to be the sole source of sense*, enjoy everlasting beatitude, after their departure from this world.

3d. Hence no vision can approach him; no language can describe him; no intellectual power can compass or determine him. We know nothing of how the Supreme Being should be explained: He is beyond all that is within the reach of comprehension, and also beyond nature, which is above conception. Our ancient *spiritual parents* have thus explained him to us.

4th. He alone, who has never been described by language, and who directs language *to its*

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meaning, is the Supreme Being; and not any specified thing which men worship: Know Thou this

5th. He alone, whom understanding cannot comprehend, and who, as said *by learned men*, knows the real nature of understanding, is the Supreme Being; and not any specified thing which men worship: Know Thou this

6th. He alone, whom no one can conceive by vision, and by whose superintendance every one perceives the objects of vision, is the Supreme Being; and not any specified thing which men worship: Know Thou this

7th. He alone, whom no one can hear through the sense of hearing, and who knows the real nature of the sense of hearing, is the Supreme Being; and not any specified thing which men worship: Know Thou this

8th. He alone, whom no one can perceive through the sense of smelling, and who applies the sense of smelling *to its objects*, is the Supreme

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Being; and not any specified thing which men worship: Know Thou this

9th. If you, [*continues the Spiritual Parent*,] *from what I have stated*, suppose *and say* that "I know the Supreme Being thoroughly," you, in truth, know very little of the Omnipresent Being; and any conception of that Being, which you limit to your powers of sense, is not only deficient, but also his description, which you extend to *the* bodies of the celestial Gods, is also imperfect*; you, consequently, should enquire into the true knowledge of the Supreme Being. *To this the pupil replies:* "I perceive that *at this moment* I begin to know God."

10. "Not that I suppose, *continues he*, that I "know God thoroughly, nor do I suppose that "I do not know him at all; as among us he, who

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* The sum of the notion concerning the Supreme Being given in the Védant, is, that he is *the soul of the universe;* and bears the same relation to all material extension, that a human soul does to the individual body with which it is connected.

"knows the meaning of the above stated asser-
"tion, is possessed of the knowledge respecting
"God;" viz. "that I neither know him tho-
"roughly, nor am entirely ignorant of him."

11th. [*The Spiritual Father again resumes:*] He, who believes that he cannot comprehend God, *does* know him; and he who believes that he can comprehend God, *does not* know him; as men of perfect understanding acknowledge him to be beyond comprehension; and men of imperfect understanding suppose him to be within the reach of their simplest perception.

12th. The notion of the sensibility of bodily organs, *which are composed of insensible particles*, leads to the notion of God; which notion alone is accurate, and tends to everlasting happiness; man gains, by self-exertion, the power of acquiring knowledge respecting God, and through the same acquisition, he acquires eternal beatitude.

13th. Whatever person has, *according to the*

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above stated doctrine, known God, is really happy, and whoever has not known him is subjected to great misery: Learned men, having reflected on the Spirit of God extending over all moveable as well as immoveable creatures, after their departure from this world, are absorbed into the Supreme Being.

In a battle between the Celestial Gods and the Demons*, God obtained victory over the latter, in favour of the former *(or properly speaking, God enabled the former to defeat the latter)*; But upon this victory being gained, the Celestial Gods acquired their respective dignities, and supposed that this victory and glory were entirely owing to themselves. The Omnipresent Being having known their boast, ap-

* In the Ukhaika it is said that those powers of the Divinity, which produce agreeable effects and conduce to moral order and happiness, are represented under the figure of Celestial Gods, and those attributes, from which pain and misery flow, are called Demons and step-brothers of the former, with whom they are in a state of perpetual hostility.

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peared to them *with an appearance beyond description.*

They could not know what adorable appearance it was: they, *consequently*, said to fire, *or properly speaking the* God of fire. "Discover thou O God of fire what adorable appearance this is." His reply was, "I shall." He proceeded fast to that adorable appearance, which asked him, "Who art thou," He then answered, "I am fire, and I am the origin of the Véd," *that is, I am a well known personage.* The Supreme Omnipotence upon being thus replied to, asked him *again* "what power is in so celebrated a person as thou art," He replied, "I can burn to ashes all that exists in the world." The Supreme Being then having laid a straw before him, said to him, "Canst thou burn this straw." The God of fire approached the straw, but could not burn it, though he exerted all his power: He then *unsuccessfully* retired and *told the others*, "I have been unable to

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discover what adorable appearance this is." Now they all said to wind *(or properly to the God of wind)* "Discover thou O God of wind, what adorable appearance this is." His reply was, "I shall." He proceeded fast to that adorable appearance, which asked him, "Who art thou," He then answered, "I am wind and I pervade unlimited space" *that is, I am a well-known personage.* The Supreme Being *upon being* thus replied to, asked him *again*, "What power is in so celebrated a person as thou art," He replied, "I can uphold all that exists in the world." The Supreme Being then having laid a straw before him, said to him, "Canst thou uphold this straw." The God of wind approached the straw, but could not hold it up, though he exerted all his power. He then *unsuccessfully* retired *and told the others*, "I have been unable to discover what adorable appearance this is." Now they all said to the God of Atmosphere." Discover thou,

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O revered God of Atmosphere, what adorable appearance this is," his reply was, "I shall." He proceeded fast to that adorable appearance, which vanished from his view. He met at the same spot a woman, *the Goddess of instruction*, arrayed in golden robes in the shape of the most beatiful Uma,* He asked her. "What was that adorable appearance;" She replied, "It was the Supreme Being, owing to whose victory, you are all advanced to exaltation." The God of Atmosphere, from her instruction, knew that it was the Supreme Being *that had appeared to them. He at first communicated that information to the Gods of Fire and of Wind.* As the Gods of Fire, Wind, and Atmosphere had approached to the adorable appearance, and had perceived it, and also as they had known, prior *to the others*, that it was indeed God *that appeared to them*, they seemed to be superior to

* The wife of Śiva.

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the other Gods. As the God of Atmosphere had approached to the adorable appearance, and perceived it, and also as he knew, prior to *every one of them*, that it was God *that appeared to them*, he seemed not only superior to every other God, but also *for that reason* exalted above the Gods of Fire and Wind.

The foregoing is a divine figurative representation of the Supreme Being; meaning that in one instance he shines at once *over all the universe*, like the illumination of lightning; and in another, that he disappears as quick as the twinkling of an eye. Again it is represented *of the Supreme Being*, that *pure* mind conceives, that it approaches to him as nearly as possible: Through the same pure mind, the pious man thinks of him, and consequently application of the mind to him is repeatedly used. That God, *who alone in reality has no resemblance, and to whom the mind* cannot approach, is adorable by all living creatures; he is there-

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fore called "*adorable;*" He should, *accordingly to the prescribed manner*, be worshiped. All creatures revere the person, who knows God, in the manner thus described. The pupil *now says*, "Tell me, O Spiritual Father, The Upanishad, or the principal part of the Véd." The *Spiritual Father makes this answer*, "I have told you the principal part of the Véd, which relates to God alone, and, indeed told you the Upanishad, of which, austere devotion, control over the senses, performance of religious rites, and the remaining parts of the Véd, as well as those Sciences, that are derived from the Véds, are *only* the feet; and whose altar and support is truth." He, who understands it as thus described, having relieved himself from sin, acquires eternal and unchangeable beatitude.

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